"Wide Awake Poem"

BENEDICT

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Excessively rare.

BENEDICT'S
"WIDE AWAKE" POEM.
1860.

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A "WIDE AWAKE" POEM;

IN WHICH ARE RECOUNTED

THE POLITICAL DEATH AND BURIAL OF THE

UNLAMENTED BUCHANAN;

AND

THE WANDERINGS OF THE LITTLE GIANT

"IN SEARCH OF HIS MOTHER:"

IN IT ARE, ALSO, BRIEFLY SET FORTH THE MERITS OF

"HONEST OLD ABE,"

OUR NEXT PRESIDENT.

BY ALMON H. BENEDICT,

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A "WIDE AWAKE" POEM.

O YE who round Castalia's Spring
Majestic circle, soar, and sing!—
Ye builders of the lofty rhyme—
Whose works shall live in future time—
Whose dread iambics oft are hurled—
Whose epic thunders shake the world!—
Now let your sweeping pinions droop;
Descend from old Parnassus' top;
For once the Muses' haunts forsake,
While I to rhymes myself betake,
And in my harsh plebeian verse
The politicians' acts rehearse.

And should I not, like Orpheus, move
The waving monarchs of the grove,
Nor rouse with tuneful strains the stones,
I'll sweep the lyre 'mong rattling bones!

Around, what varied scenes we view—
The bright, the dark, the strange, the new:
Our crops are good, our Banks are sound,
While thrift and comfort smile around.
No wasting pestilence hath spread
Its gloomy horrors over head;
From golden mines and prosperous trade
Full many a princely fortune's made;
No foreign port our commerce bars,
All court our glorious stripes and stars.

I own, we've here and there a spot,
From history's page we fain would blot.
We hate corruption's evil work;
We blush for Young, the Mormon Turk;
Disrelish rancorous debates;
Deplore estrangement 'twixt the States;
Lament the cheatings at elections;
Acknowledge many imperfections;
Yet, on the whole, we're pleased to tell,
Old Uncle Sam does pretty well:
The veteran hath so *many* boys,
He must indulge them in a noise:
'Twould puzzle e'en the wisest pate
To keep the rugged rascals straight!
But e'en with head and hands so full,
He's better off than Johnny Bull,

Or any sovereign 'cross the seas—
Pope, Emperor, or whom you please.

But lo, a tale—'tis somewhat strange.
So let the Muse her measure change.

'Twas down in the Keystone, where coal beds are found;
Where iron and limestone in plenty abound;
Where bold mountain ridges in grandeur arise,
And oft with their summits seem wooing the skies,—
'Twas down in the State where our king-ridden sires
Set the world all ablaze with their patriot fires—
Where once on a time did they firmly agree
That "all men created are equal and free,"—
'Twas down in the State of broad brims and rich acres.
The land of the Dutchmen, the home of the Quakers.
There dwelt a hard-featured, old-bachelor man;
They made him Chief Ruler; his name was Buchan.

He dined on the best, had servants at pleasure,
And paid all his bills out of Uncle Sam's treasure;
Was bold in his bearing as nabob, or Turk,
And never o'erfond of us fellows that work—

Thought half of mankind born, booted and spurred,
To ride all the rest, "by the grace of the Lord."

Well, now, as my story runs, (so says my Muse,)
Buchanan was groaning with fits of the blues.
He called his physicians, both learned and grave,
From the land of the bludgeon, the home of the slave.
But they all turned away, discouraged and sad,
And, looking hard up, like the last run of shad,
They sighed for the contents of Uncle Sam's purse,
While their patient was growing alarmingly worse.

He knew very well he must soon yield his breath,
And die a most wretched political death:
For after next March, never more, among men,
Shall Jemmy be thought of, or mentioned, again.

But stay—we're too fast—e'en the vilest that ends—
An Arnold, a Brooks, and a Nero had friends.
Who knows but some crony of James shall draw near,
To seek his remains and a monument rear?

Let's fancy that tombstone,—say twenty feet high;
Its apex turned earthward, its base to the sky;

And when in the ground it should stand for inspection,
Of course it should lean in a southern direction.
An object unique, let it tower o'er his head,
Not marble, nor granite, but wholly of lead—
Both solid and massive, and like the departed—
A bachelor emblem, (not over warm-hearted).

It should bear, on one side, a few words of instruction
On Cuban affairs, (his official production);
While one is adorned with our patriots in chains,
And scalps from the murdered on Kanzas' fair plains;
Missouri's rough hordes to the third should aspire,
With women in tears and their dwellings on fire;
A fitting device should embellish the fourth—
Heads falling in baskets, all over the North—
Poor, crest-fallen Democrats, tearing their hair,
Bewildered by cries of "Lo here!" and "Lo there!"—
Each seeming to say, as the trouble increases,
"Alas for our party, 'tis all torn to pieces!"

But we leave this stale subject alone in his glory,
And change, for a moment, the plan of our story:
We turn to the "Giant"—the bit of a man
That worried his party and "whalloped" Buchan.

This giant, though small, was a muscular mass,
With a flexible tongue and a forehead of brass;
Could excite with his gestures, persuade with his mouth,
In a speech for the North, or a speech for the South;—
Was *all* things to *all* men—a human chameleon;
Could exhort like a preacher or swear like a felon;
At one time could laud, and could e'en "canonize,"
Then send to perdition a famed compromise;
Could higgle, could wiggle and dodge like an eel,
And hammer and clamor and crawl for repeal.
The hobby, the burden, the glory of Doug—
His *sine qua non*—was his squatter Humbug!

Now lo, this young giant—this *babe* of the West—
In his best bib and tucker, nice breeches, and vest,
Would take an excursion, for something or other;
'Twas said that he journeyed in search of his mother.

His movements were rapid, and rather erratic—
By railroad and steamboat—terrene, and aquatic—
He sped through the valleys, he clambered the mountains,
He came to the clam-bakes, and stopped at the fountains;
He blustered, and blabbered, and waddled about,
His mother scarce knowing her darling was out!

It soon was apparent, his filial affection
Was second to schemes for the coming election:
For here we'll just mention, the fellow pretended,
Although he'd the people most grossly offended,
That somehow or other—by hook or by crook—
He'd be the successor of President Buck!

So the whole wear and tear of his body and boots—
His swagger and thunder—are only for votes!
(Methinks, if his mother's a sensible dame
She'll think of her bantling and redden for shame!)

This small, bogus giant, now stumping the States,
Seems rushing to ruin, impelled by the Fates,
For sure as the people shall rise, in their might,
And strike for their country—for "UNION AND RIGHT!"—
Of Doug and his party, survivors shall find,
They'll leave scarce a shred, or a shadow behind!

If any are doubtful just let them attend,
We'll mention the means to accomplish our end:
In a smart, thriving town, far away to the west,
With good, honest people, dwells Abra'm, the blest.

No beauty, 'tis true, but often the case is,
There's *greatness of soul with the plainest of faces.*

Though not like the rover—so oily and pliant—
He's more of a statesman, he's more of a giant!
And all who best know him are ready to own,
He has a sound head, and a MIGHTY BACKBONE!

He's a first-rate debater, deals capital blows,
As his gassy antagonist very well knows:
With his legal acumen, if jurists are frail,
He can mend every gap with a logical rail;
With his tongue for a wedge and his brain for a maul
He can split sham Democracy down, very small!
He can walk through a shag-bark, demolish an oak,
And slippery-elm Douglas subdue with a stroke;
He hates all oppression, is trusty and bold;
Has *never been purchased*—CAN NEVER BE SOLD!
He springs from the people, he's not a vile tool;
He's not a mere upstart—he's nobody's fool;
A good honest worker, quite likely he'll view us
Entitled to freedom, nor say he'll "subdue" us;
He'll never fly into conniptions and panics,
And call us his "mud-sills," and "greasy mechanics!"—
In short, if we've rights, and we don't wish to lose 'em,
We'll find there is SAFETY IN ABRAHAM'S BOSOM!

Well, since the good people have thought it was best
To make a descent on the Democrat nest;
To drive out the scamps that betray and misrule us,
Defy and belie us, provoke us and fool us;
Who only consult their own interests and wishes,
And wrangle and scramble for loaves and for fishes;
They've fully resolved, Honest Abe (with his spouse)
Shall set things to-rights in the famous White House.

'Tis the night before 'Lection, methinks; through the land
Each voter sits, ready, with ballot in hand;
Elated with hope, nor depressed with a sorrow,
"Each bosom beats light at the thought of the morrow."
As when, o'er the plain, by the camp fires afar,
The soldiers are watching, impatient of war,
Or sleep on their weapons, awaiting the day,
The blast of the bugle and battle array;
So rest all our freemen, resolved in their souls,
To do their whole duty next day at the polls.

The clubs and mass-meetings and speeches are o'er;
Pole-raisings and songs and huzzas are no more;
The Democrat journals have told their best lies;
The motherless giant worn out his disguise;
Those fierce southern bullies, so *hostile to brains*,
Lie soaking in liquor and *dreaming of canes;*

Each dough-face at length has expended his gall;
The last dog has barked at the "Hole in the Wall."

'Tis morning, and lo, at the roll of the drum,
From valley and hill-top the Wide Awakes come!—
A host in themselves and the pride of the nation—
Determined on changing the Administration.
With smiles on their faces and joy in their notes
For Lincoln and Hamlin they thrust in their votes.

Here and there a poor Democrat lingers around,
In blank consternation, his eyes on the ground,
His mouth all agape with emotion and wonder,
At the tramping of troops and the rail-splitting thunder!

The contest is o'er:—as the people expected,
THE COUNTRY IS SAFE FOR OLD ABE IS ELECTED!

But where is Stephe Douglas? and Echo says, "where?"
Will any one answer?—does any one care?
Perhaps like poor Walker his giants he'll muster,
And head the ragmuffins as Chief Fillibuster;
Perchance he'll assemble his squads of sly knaves,

And hunt, like a bloodhound, the fugitive slaves!
Perchance he'll go shooting the wild goose and panther,
Or take a new journey, in search of his gran'ther!
But ah, I much fear me he'll blubber and shiver,
A SQUATTER FORLORN ON THE BANKS OF SALT RIVER!!

MORAL.

Take warning, my friends, from the tale we have told
Of the bachelor President, crabbed and old;
And if to his Chair you should ever aspire,
Don't set the best blood of the nation on fire,—
Don't yield to Slavocracy all it demands,
But study the creed from a Jefferson's hands;
Let his old Declaration be duly respected;
Our great Constitution not wholly neglected;
With Uncle Sam's money don't wastefully revel,
Nor mortgage your party and self to the Devil!

Again:—if some dwarf Polyphemus you find,
With but half of an eye, (and that half should be blind)
In search of his Ma, with his mouth in a pucker,
Why, don't be alarmed at the squalls of the "*sucker*,"
But chuckle and shake, with derision and laughter,
'Tis the Government Sugar-teat only he's after!

Once more:—if some youth who may list to my song,
Guides an unwieldy flat-boat the river along;
Or sweats, like a Trojan, at splitting of rails,
And braves, like a hero, adversity's gales;—
Who always is true to the dictates of right;
With no guilt of conscience to haunt him at night;
Who, modest and truthful, will do what he can
To overcome evil, and elevate man;—
O, let it console him, if e'er he's deprest,
To think of the *lucky Old Boy of the West!*

STATE AND COUNTY.

I'm proud of our ticket—so choice and complete!
In fact, it's a ticket that *cannot be beat!*

There's honest Ed. Morgan—a popular man!—
There's staunch Robert Campbell—assail him who can?

There's the fine Mr. Barnes—there's the fair Mr. Bates—
We're bound to elect 'em, as sure as the Fates!

And then, we've for Congress, one, modest—unvaunting—
Whom we tried in the balance, and didn't find wanting!
Who stood up for Freedom, as firm as John Rogers,
And did a good deed for the worthy old "*sojers!*"
A man who will honor the party and place,
With his legal address and his scholarly grace:
So, I hardly need tell you—since doubtless you knew well—
When Congress convenes, *to look out for a Duell!*

Again, for Assembly—he's *sound* as a bell!
And 'twould take a long time all his merits to tell;
He's as honest as Abe, and as firm as the hills!
He'll vote for good laws and look out for bad Bills;
So the man must be green, be a dolt or a ninny,
That wouldn't be anxious to vote for a Kinney!

There's Gross, too (whose name might to strangers seem funny)—
He knows very well how to handle the money.

The poor shall be cared for by no surly, mean man,
But we'll give in our votes, *with a will*, for a Greenman!

And then,—in a Tillinghast every one's trust is ;—
Let us do unto him as he'll do to us—JUSTICE!

We've a Pierce and a Whitmore, to manage the schools—
Inspect all the Masters, and lay down the rules ;
They're familiar with teaching—*have been through the mill,*
And will do up the business, *as fine as a quill!*

We have for our Coroner him we desire—
A man that's baptized with REPUBLICAN FIRE!
From the South he's an exile—the land of his love—
But he comes with the THUNDER AND LIGHTNING OF JOVE!
To scathe the vile tricksters, and all of that kidney!
So, *honor and office to* ELOQUENT SIDNEY!